one expedient passed easily to another. His career had been marked by many blunders, and he had often been brought to a stand on the verge of some abyss which threatened failure and ruin; yet, like the driver of a midnight train, he kept the headlight of caution trimmed and burning. Careless of the dangers abounding behind the walls of revolutionary darkness which hedged his track, he ever paused before those immediately confronting him, and sometimes retreated far to find a hazardless circuit. Brumaire was almost the only occasion of his larger life on which, unwary, he had come in full career upon an open chasm. Fate being propitious, he was saved. Lucien, with presence of mind, opened the throttle, and, by releasing the pent-up enthusiasm of the soldiers at the critical instant, safely drove the machine across a toppling bridge.

Sobered for the moment by contemplating a past danger which had threatened annihilation, and by the crowding responsibilities of the future, the First Consul put into practical operation many important revolutionary ideals. But in this process he took full advantage of the state of French society to make himself indispensable to the continuance of French life on its new path. By the parade of civil liberty and a restored social order he so minimized the constitutional side of his government as to erect it into a virtual tyranny. The self-styled commonwealth, with a chief magistrate claiming to hold his office as a public trust, was quite ready to be launched as a liberal empire under a ruler who in reality held the highest power as a possession.

The murder of the Due d'Enghien was virtually a notification of this fact to all the dynasties of Europe as well as to the French nation. Their behavior was conclusive evidence that they understood it as such. Death was the fate destined not merely for the intestine